THE CHALLENGE OF RELEVANT LEADERSHIP

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The past decade has seen the United States Army involved in operations on two fronts: The war in Vietnam has been a major effort; the second major effort, in the words of General Bruce Palmer Jr., has been, "a re-emphasis of the leadership principles that have always sustained us. The modernization of our attitudes and practices with respect to our care and concern for the soldier is one of our primary concerns."[1]

The signing of the Vietnam cease-fire treaty on 27 January 1973 brings with it a new day for the Army. During the 1960's and into the 1970's a state of flux has existed in the American society and in the world. During this time there have been two primary causes for this constant change: the war in Vietnam and a new attitude toward authority on the part of the younger generation.

The U.S. Army met the challenge in Vietnam in a bold and responsive manner. The Army has also responded to the challenge of relating to, and meeting the needs of, our changing society. It seems evident that the Army must make every effort to continue to meet the challenge of becoming a vital element in

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[1]General Bruce Palmer Jr., "The Challenge of Change," Army--1972 Green Book, XXII (October, 1972), 22.

today's society. If the Army is going to play an important, positive role it might do well to reconsider its present practices in the area of interpersonal relations.

It must be pointed out here that all progress which the Army has made during the past decade in the area of human relations, realistic leadership, and concern for the individual has been made during a period of time when the "mission" has been a major war effort. The acceptance of the challenge of the modern volunteer Army program reflects the Army's confidence in itself that it will be able to meet the needs of, and make a significant contribution to, the emerging modern society.

The changes, accomplishments, and continuing struggles of today's Army are many. In spite of a major combat effort certain progress has been made in the area of human relations, race relations, drug/alcohol abuse, job satisfaction, individual motivation, and individual professionalism. Not only has certain progress been made in these areas, but also it is evident that the Army has led the society as a whole in progress in these areas.

Now that the combat effort in Vietnam is no longer a reality the result can have one of two effects: The lack of immediate challenge as a motivating force can cause a stagnation effect with a resultant lack of progress in the areas of professionalism and human relations. Or, the elimination of the

Vietnam war effort can allow the Army to put increased emphasis on meeting the challenge of the modern volunteer Army concept, with resultant substantial progress in both professionalism and human relations.

The Vietnam era has emphatically pointed out some of the areas in which the Army must strive to bring about changes, if a professional modern Army is to become a reality. An article in the 20 December 1972 issue of Army Times entitled "Deserters' Reasons Not New at All" points out that since 1966 there have been 432,422 servicemen who have deserted; of these "more than 32,500 remain at large, some 2,500 in foreign countries."[2] The article further states that although some have deserted because of anti-war sentiments, "Leading causes are family and financial problems, romantic entanglements, lack of respect for military authority, irresponsibility and lack of self-discipline, inability to adjust to the military...indifference from superiors to personal problems. Only five percent of the deserters now in foreign lands have actually voiced political or anti-Vietnam war feelings, according to Pentagon statistics."[3]

The seriousness of this desertion rate is pointed out in another recent issue of Army Times: "An indication of the

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[2]Sue Toma, "Deserters' Reasons Not New at All," Army Times, 20 Dec 72, p. 8.

[3]Ibid.

soaring desertion rate is the comparison of recent figures with World War II rates. The desertion rate in 1970 was 142.2 per thousand men in uniform; at the height of World War II it was 72.9 per thousand men."[4]

The trend which administrative discharges have followed during the past three years is alarming. According to the Chief of the Enlisted Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army, "The trend has been one of a steady increase in the number of administrative discharges during the period when the strength of the Army was rapidly decreasing."

This adverse trend in numbers of administrative discharges issued during the period FY 1970-72 is partially a result of certain actions taken by Department of the Army to eliminate unproductive individuals. Actually, this gets to the heart of the problem. The elimination of truly undesirable and unproductive individuals is, of course, the only practical approach for the military; but how many of those individuals who were thus separated could have been salvaged through the use of modern, relevant, professional leadership techniques on the part of those unit commanders involved?

During the period FY 1970-72 the number of administrative

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[4]"FBI Collaring Deserters," Army Times, 27 Dec 72, p. 47.

discharges in the Army increased from 26,366 to 50,437. During the same period of time the enlisted strength was decreasing from 1,153,013 to 686,695. Percentage-wise the number of other-than-honorable discharges increased during this period of time from 4.2% to 10.5% of the total number of enlisted personnel.

The number of desertions occurring in the Army today, as well as the recent increase in the number of administrative discharges which are granted, indicate that problems of human relations, individual boredom, lack of personal and motivating challenge, must be met head-on with aggressive, relevant, leadership.

Of course this fact is acknowledged by military leaders. The first step in solving a problem is to acknowledge that the problem exists. To admit the problem honestly and forthrightly and to seek to solve this problem in the same manner is really the genius of military leadership. Since Harry S. Truman declared that the Army would be integrated much progress has been made in the area of human relations. The Army has been a leader in our society in the area of race-relations, drug-abuse prevention and rehabilitation. But there is much left to be done. General Palmer states, "I would estimate that 'people problems' absorb more of my attention than any other area,...."[5]

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[5]Palmer, "The Challenge of Change," p. 20.

The fact that problems do exist is evident. The examination of the problem as outlined above is necessary if the problem is to be dealt with in an effective manner. Furthermore, "a healthy increase in public and congressional scrutiny of defense affairs, have encouraged us to take a closer look at ourselves in our changing environment."[6] Having been brought face to face with the problem the most effective approach is to engage it in an aggressive, straightforward, and positive manner.

There is no doubt that the Army's primary resource is people. This is true basically because people are the greatest resource of the American society. The primary element required to properly utilize the great resource is the element of leadership. This is especially true today in view of the present reduction in the size of the military force and the pressing need to build a professional volunteer Army, which is both an effective fighting force and a vital positive element in today's changing society.

Leadership is the key. Much has been written in recent years about effective leadership within the military. Yet much of that which has been written has done little more than to acknowledge that ineffective leadership is part of the problem.

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[6] Ibid., p. 22.

What is the role of the military leader? Possibly in the past the role of the leader, commander, combat leader has emphasized the individual who occupys this role. Today, the emphasis must extend beyond the individual who fills this role. Today, the emphasis must be placed on the mission-type order, which allows men to think for themselves, use and develop their own ingenuity and initiative. Greater emphasis must be placed on individual responsibility, personal motivation, what might be termed internal as well as external leadership.

General Michael S. Davison, commander of U.S. Army Europe & Seventh Army since May 1971 states that, "It is clear that the effective management of men under modern conditions requires a blending of old principles with modern techniques."[7] General Davison further states, "The small-unit leader must continue to play his role in ministering to his men...."[8] The key words in the previous statement are "ministering to his men." This is the aspect of leadership which is being emphasized, and this is where the problems of human relations will be solved.

Repeatedly, today, military leaders in the highest positions are re-emphasizing the importance of the leader's

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[7]General Michael S. Davison, "Lean, Tight, Europe Aims to Set Pace," Army--1972 Green Book, XXII (October, 1972), 44.

[8]Ibid.

positive influence upon his men. A leader, by definition, must have followers. Each one of these followers is to some extent a leader in so far as he leads himself as an individual, i.e., makes decisions concerning his own actions; and many of the followers are leaders of others within the unit. It seems that a valid principle of leadership is the ability to effectively pass the leadership role down the chain to each one of those who follows. The leader becomes effective to the degree that those whom he leads are willing to fulfill their roles in positively exercising their leadership role.

Secretary of the Army, Robert F. Froehlke, refers in principle to the leadership role of the one who follows when he stated in 1971, "I intend to operate with two key words. The first word is involvement. I intend to involve as many people as possible at various stages of the total management process."[9] This principle was effectively illustrated by Captain Charles Henning, Commander, 92d Transportation Company (CAR), Special Troops Battalion, V Corps Support Command, Frankfurt, Germany. In a recently published interview Captain Henning states, "Within minutes after a new private arrives he is in my office. I introduce myself. Then I brief him on the company and his job.... Then I ask him what kind of job he is going to do for

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[9]Robert F. Froehlke, "The Key Words: Involvement and Teamwork," Army--1971 Green Book, XXI (October, 1971), 17.

me. If he responds favorably he can call himself a Private First Class as of that moment."[10] The captain's actions in this case seem to effectively illustrate the proper role of extended leadership. When the private is asked what kind of job he is going to do in the unit he is immediately cast into the role of leader; he is at the least a leader of himself, and as such he practices leadership. The positive impact of this approach in the area of individual motivation is worth considering.

The practicality of this approach is further illustrated by Captain Henning: "If a man is made responsible for something he'll take care of it. Take my drivers for example. I gave them complete responsibility for their own vehicles. The response was amazing. Within weeks we had some of the finest-looking vehicles in U.S. Army Europe."[11]

The secret of involvement or extended leadership as illustrated above seems to be communication. Much is said today about the generation gap. By inference some are talking about a chasm, a generation chasm, a division which cannot be bridged. This negativism is unfounded. Reasons for the generation gap are stated by Chaplain (COL) Albert F. Ledebuhr: "Periods of

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[10] SP5 Dave Clayton, "As a Company Commander Sees It," Soldiers, XXVII (April, 1972), 29.

[11] Ibid., p. 30.

cultural change are becoming shorter."[12] Today's older generations have values formulated by the era of the Depression. The younger generations' values are being formulated by events like riots, drug problems, assassinations, racial problems, Cuba, Vietnam, scandals. "It is a set of ideas and events that generates questions, challenges authority, and possibly even causes attitudes of apathy."[13] Chaplain Ledebuhr points out, "Communication is the real hurdle. In the words of Lt. Gen. John J. Tolson, deputy commanding general of CONARC, 'We cannot lead today's soldier if we are handicapped by the inability to effectively communicate with him.'"[14]

The importance of communication in fulfilling the leadership role cannot be over-estimated. Bridging the generation gap is both possible and necessary; this can and will be accomplished by improved communication. "Communication must be effective from the top down before it will ever work well in reverse order. That means the senior has 'the monkey on his back.' He must take the extra effort to make sense to the junior."[15]

Concerning the importance of communication SMA Silas L.

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[12]Chaplain (COL) Albert F. Ledebuhr, "A New Look at the 'Ultimate Weapon,'" Army, XXI (November, 1971), 22.

[13]Ibid., p. 23.

[14]Ibid., p. 24.

[15]Ibid.

Copeland, Sergeant Major of the Army, has stated, "The second challenge to today's NCO is effective mutual communication. Without it effective leadership is not possible. (I do not agree with those who believe the generation gap cannot be closed. With effective mutual communication it can.)"[16]

Communication is an essential element of leadership; however, communication should not be considered as an end in itself. A professional fighting force not only needs leaders who know how to communicate effectively but also leaders who have something relevant to communicate. As today's military leaders speak concerning the professional, vital, modern volunteer Army they repeatedly indicate certain elements which will be found in the role of involved, extended leadership. SMA Copeland refers to these elements by what he calls the "challenge of being relevant."[17]

It seems almost obvious that the volunteer Army must be relevant to the needs of today's society or it won't exist. This professional Army can be a significant asset to our society through its civic-action programs, its positive effect upon the young men of the society, and its ability to handle civil disturbance and disaster when they occur. AWOL's, desertions,

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[16]SMA Silas L. Copeland, "The NCO Must Grow with the Army," Army--1972 Green Book, XXII (October, 1972), 25.

[17]Ibid.

and administrative discharges are the enemy which relevant leadership can effectively combat.

The concept of decentralized training is in accord with this type leadership. Leadership roles from the company/battery commander down to the individual soldier must be concerned with the whole person, including training, physical needs, emotional needs, social needs, ethnic needs, spiritual needs. General Ralph E. Haines Jr., former CONARC commander, states, "The Army has traditionally maintained a continuing concern for the total person. This whole-man concept simply recognizes the indivisible nature of the human personality.... Apart from training a soldier in military skills, we at CONARC feel a keen obligation to make him a better person and a more responsible citizen, both during his Army service and after he returns to civilian life."[18] General Haines goes on to mention athletics, community involvement, and civic action as endeavors which give young soldiers a sense of genuine accomplishment. He talks about unique challenges, adventure training, individual self-reliance, job satisfaction; all of this is an effort to develop the whole man through military service, an effort to build better men through increased individual maturity.

In the above statement General Haines mentioned a com-

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[18]General Ralph E. Haines Jr., "Vast CONARC: Forger of Men and New Ideas," Army--1972 Green Book, XXII (October, 1972), 33.

mander's concern for the soldier after he returns to civilian life. This concept, it seems, is the ultimate in extended leadership. The most expeditious approach to an efficient, professional fighting force is to develop the personal motivation , personal maturity of the individual soldier. Maturity will come through proper training and experience. Motivation is key both to increased maturity and involved leadership. This motivation will vary with individuals, yet it is the primary, most basic element in the development of a modern, vital Army.

Every man has the need to know that someone cares for him. This is the key to discipline. In combat this is not usually a problem, because every man in a squad knows that the lives of the other members of the squad are dependent on him. However, in garrison, on post-support details this need to know that someone cares is not met that easily. Concerning a man's need to know that someone cares General Palmer states, "In convincing the soldier that the Army cares about him, we realize that training programs and physical facilities are only part of the equation.... If we are to have a successful all-volunteer force, we must treat the soldier as a respected professional careerist."[19] The changes taking place in the Army today, according to General Palmer, are "aimed at enhancing a soldier's motivation."

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[19]Palmer, "The Challenge of Change," p. 22.

Through increased individual motivation this involved, extended leadership will become a reality. Through the implementation of intensive, constant communication between leaders and those individuals who are aware of increased individual motivation the many problems of human relations, generation gap, ethnic differences, apathy, AWOL/desertion, drug/alcohol abuse, social differences, educational deficiencies, and sociological factors will be not only solved, but these factors as they are overcome will serve to develop a more professional, more highly trained fighting force which will play a vital role in a peace-time society.

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